

November 2008

# Santa Rosa County District 3 Newsletter

## *A Message From Your Commissioner*



### District 3

**Commissioner &  
Commission Chair  
W.D. "Don" Salter**

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the mail.**

Finally, all the elections are over! We have a new President and two new Commissioners – Jim Williamson, District One and Lane Lynchard, District Five. I look forward to working with both as well as Commissioners Goodin and Cole. We have many challenges facing us with the coming of the new year. I am an optimist and see these challenges as opportunities as well. Opportunities for a better tomorrow and a better Santa Rosa County – my home and your home! I know with the great employees that we have, along with our dedicated citizens, our future will be bright and successful.

As we all realize, our national economy is going through some very trying times and certainly has had a negative impact on our local economy as well. When we compare our county to other counties across the country, we are in much better shape than most. This is true because we have a strong military presence in our county and we continue to do pretty well bringing in new businesses and helping many of our existing businesses expand. Santa Rosa County was recently chosen as the home for a new private correctional facility that will bring approximately 400 new jobs to our county. Many of these jobs will include correctional officers, medical personnel, technology positions and other high paying jobs. The total number of new businesses in our county has increased over 50% during the past seven years. Our population has increased over 25% in the past seven years as well – people only move to strong economic areas. Once again, working together we will continue to have a great county!



The month of November is very special to me as it is to many Americans. It's not only the start of the holiday season, but more importantly, we get to honor all our veterans on Veterans Day — November 11. We enjoy our many freedoms today because of our veterans – men and women who have fought not only for our freedom but freedom around the world as well. Men and women who were prepared to give their lives, and many did, so you and I can be free. So as we go into the holiday season, let's be thankful for our veterans, and show our appreciation to those who have served and to those who are serving.

Happy Holidays and God Bless America.

**- Don Salter, District 3 Commissioner  
Commission Chair**



# Santa Rosa District 3 News

## Meet a Santa Rosa County Hero

At 83 years old, Cyrus Blackman is lifetime resident of Milton. He served in World War II in the US Army, 563rd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion for three years after joining on his 18 birthday. Mr. Blackman served overseas for 17 months, traveling to Liverpool, South Hampton, Normandy Beach, and through France, Belgium, Holland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany. He was awarded three Bronze Stars for his service in the Battle of the Bulge, which was the bloodiest of the battles that U.S. forces experienced in World War II, the Battle for the Rhine, and the Battle of Central Europe.

Cyrus recently traveled to visit the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. as an Honor Flight participant. Since his trip, he is visiting schools in Santa Rosa County to speak about his life and the Honor Flight Program. For this newsletter, Mr. Blackman shares some of his experiences.

### What was it like when you returned from serving in World War II?

Rationing was almost over, but gas and sugar was still rationed. I tried to pick up where I left off. I thought people would not believe what I saw in Europe, so I did not talk about it. I have had nightmares ever since, and suffered from "shell shock" or what they call post traumatic stress disorder. After returning, I threw away my uniform and medals hoping to forget. For 60 years, I spoke to no one, not even my family about my time in the army. I thought it would make it go away, but it did not.

### Why did you want to participate in the Honor Flight Program?

I read about it in the paper. At first, I did not want to go and relive what I have been trying to forget all these years, but my wife kept asking me to apply, so I did.

### What was your experience like traveling to Washington?

I thought it would open old wounds, but I am so glad I went. It is something I just can't explain; it was a soothing over. This trip, and visiting the schools afterward to talk about my trip, has been a release, a healing process. By speaking with other Vets I have confirmed memories that I thought I might have made up in my head and got new ideas on how to live with PTSD. My trip is helping me to learn how to live with my memories, though I still have the nightmares.

### What has it been like speaking to students in Santa Rosa County?

I have been amazed how enthusiastic they are to learn. They ask really logical and deep questions. They have studied some of the history and want to learn more. Speaking to them is helping me too.

### Would you recommend other WWII Veterans apply for the Honor Flight Program?

Yes, definitely. If it does for others what it did for me, it will change their lives.



*Photo: Commissioner Don Salter and WWII Veteran Cyrus Blackman at the Veterans Day Celebration on November 11.*

## Want to help support Honor Flight?

**Donations in any amount can be made directly to the Santa Rosa County Veterans Memorial-Honor Flight fund,  
at 5191 C Willing Street, Milton, FL 32570.  
All donations are tax deductible.**

## Operation Connect-Vet

Starting December 1, Santa Rosa County Veterans who may require assistance with transportation to the Veterans Affairs Joint Ambulatory Care Center in Pensacola can apply for help via a new, free transportation service. Operation Connect-Vet is made possible by a grant from the Elks National Foundation to the Milton Elks Lodge #2377, in partnership with Santa Rosa County Veterans Services and Pensacola Bay Transportation.

The program is targeted to veterans who have difficulty securing transportation. Transportation will be provided two days a week; only a simple application is required and it may be obtained by calling (850) 981-7153 or by visiting the Santa Rosa County Veterans Services Website at [www.santarosa.fl.gov/veterans](http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/veterans). Applications will be accepted beginning December 1.



# *Santa Rosa District 3 News*



## ***Santa Rosa Schools Support Honor Flight Initiative***

Few opportunities exist that allow two different generations to connect with a pride of understanding. Over the past 13 weeks the Santa Rosa District Schools have had the privilege of participating in the Honor Flight Program by raising dollars to sponsor our veterans on a flight. This has allowed the generation of today to connect with the greatest generation, as these veterans have visited our schools and opened eyes to the sacrifice that has been made in the preservation of freedom.

Santa Rosa County District Schools has accepted the opportunity to raise dollars in an effort to send each eligible WWII veterans that resides in Santa Rosa County to the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC. Students in all schools, under the leadership of administrators who understand the value of having these men of courage in our schools, have sold cup cakes, kissed pigs, had "penny wars" and given their left over change to raise \$800.00 per flight. At present over 9 schools have raised enough money to sponsor a flight, many have pledged to pay for two and three flights.

In return, each school has the opportunity to visit with these men of courage at school. Our purpose of participating is to bring the courage of the WWII veterans into the classrooms of our schools and allow students of today to hear their stories and understand their courage. The examples of greatness exhibited by the WWII veterans are lessons that will serve well in the lives of our students today. The courage of the men honored in the Honor Flights is what our students should emulate as they learn to deal with the problems and strife of today. The two generations sitting together and sharing is a positive experience for our students.

*- Tim Wyrosdick  
Santa Rosa County  
Superintendent of Schools*

### ***Thank You Students & Staff!***

**Amazing Honor Flight donation total of \$12,847.78 from Santa Rosa Schools  
(as of November 20)**

Canal Street Offices	\$435
Berryhill Administration Complex	\$800
Gulf Breeze High School	\$1,238.71
Milton High School	\$800
Pace High School	\$800
Gulf Breeze Middle School	\$3,974.07
King Middle School	\$800
West Navarre Intermediate School	\$2,400
Locklin Technical Center	\$1600

### ***Golf Tournament Raises \$25K***

The Santa Rosa County Whiting Fliers Golf Association Veterans Memorial Golf Classic was held on Friday, November 14 at the NAS Whiting Field Golf Course. Over **\$25,000** was raised to benefit the Emerald Coast Honor Flight Santa Rosa County Initiative to send local World War II veterans on the next Honor Flight in April as well as future flights. The tournament's first place winner was Pen Air Federal Credit Union's team of Curtis Davis, Rick Berry, Ken Smith and David Chalker. Greg Dally from Gulf Breeze, was the lucky winner of the golf ball drop. Special thanks to the golf tournament chair, Sheriff Wendell Hall, and his hardworking committee.

The Emerald Coast Honor Flight Santa Rosa County Initiative is made up of leaders including elected officials, area chambers of commerce, businesses, and NAS Whiting Field who joined together to raise \$80,000 to send 100 of our WWII veterans to Washington, DC at no cost to them. As part of an Honor Flight, WWII veterans visit their memorial and are recognized for their service to our country.





# *Santa Rosa District 3 News*

## **New Monument Unveiled at Award Winning Veterans Memorial Plaza**

A new monument depicting the historic World War II battle of Iwo Jima was unveiled on November 11 at the Santa Rosa County Veterans Memorial Plaza as part of the Veterans Day celebration. The monument is in honor of all Americans who fought so bravely to defend freedom around the world during WWII.

The Iwo Jima monument is part of the Santa Rosa County Veterans Memorial Plaza, which won its second gold medal from the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge in 2007. The monument is a modified version of the famous flag rising at Mount Suribachi. It includes a water basin and waterfall which represents the small island surrounded by the Pacific Ocean.



## **TEAMwork is the Key for Approval of New Detention Center**

With the recent announcement by the State of Florida, Department of Management Services that it had approved the design, construction, financing and operation of a 2,000-bed prison east of Milton, a major milestone had been reached. TEAM Santa Rosa would like to take a moment to thank everyone involved for a job well done. This is yet another shining example of how Santa Rosa County is increasingly being added to a short list of communities where businesses and organizations look to find success. Truly the centerpiece for our continued economic development, the thing that separates us from other markets, is our people – from our community and business leaders to our highly skilled and innovative workforce.

The approval for the \$120-million project is the culmination of many hours of hard work and cooperation between local businesses, government agencies and economic development professionals, including the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners, the City of Milton and East Milton Water. But there is still much to do over the months ahead to bring this ambitious project to fruition. For example, TEAM Santa Rosa is currently working toward obtaining grants that will fund the design and construction of needed infrastructure that will not only accommodate the new facility, but will also serve the county's newly purchased 160-acre expansion of the Santa Rosa Industrial Park.

So what can citizens of Santa Rosa expect over the coming months? To begin with, the construction of the \$120-million detention center is set to begin in the first quarter of 2009 with completion expected within 18 months. Although the facility will be privately managed by The GEO Group, Inc., a world leader in the delivery of correctional, detention, and residential treatment services to federal, state, and local government agencies worldwide, they will be relying almost exclusively on the local workforce to meet construction and manning needs, according to Cloid Shuler, vice president of business development for The GEO Group.

Hiring is expected to begin for the facility in Spring 2010, and will be overseen by Workforce Escarosa. The facility is expected to employ more than 400 personnel, providing services ranging from administration and education to health care and information technology, with an average salary 15 percent above the county's current average wage rate of \$15.29 per hour. Details about applying for employment can be found at [www.workforceescarosa.com](http://www.workforceescarosa.com).

Overall, the construction phase of the facility could potentially inject an initial \$202.5 million into the local economy with an additional \$46.9 million generated annually from facility operations, based on estimated figures by the Haas Center for Business Research and Economic Development. TEAM Santa Rosa Chairman Ed Gray is very excited about the prospects of this venture and the economic opportunities the detention center will bring to Santa Rosa County. "This facility presents a great economic boost for our local community. In light of current economic trends, it is important that we identify businesses that are, to a large extent, immune from economic downturns. A construction project of this size will inject capital and create good paying jobs," he said.

TEAM Santa Rosa is extremely excited about the economic benefits that the detention center holds for Santa Rosa County and would like to send a heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in gaining a hard-earned victory for Santa Rosa County. As Santa Rosa Commissioner Don Salter recently noted at a media event, "This is a positive move for our economy that has been made possible through the joint efforts of our local government and business leaders."